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MY DINNER WITH MARK

BY

NORMAN BEIM

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NORMAN BEIM

PII Redacted

CAST OF CHARACTERS

Mark

Nathan

SCENE

Mark's living room in Livingston, New Jersey

ACT I

(NATHAN appears at the side of the stage, in limbo.)

NATHAN: Some time ago I received a call from my cousin, Mark. I thought it was rather odd. Not that we're on bad terms or anything like that, but he's much closer to my brother, Marty, than he is to me. They're more of an age and they sometimes double date with their significant others, in Mark's case his wife. We're first cousins, Mark and I. His mother and my father were brother and sister. But we come from two different worlds. Not only geographically. He came from Israel and I was born and raised here in the states. But he happens to be a civilian. By that I mean he belongs to that nebulous world of people who are not in the theatre. My mother used to point to Mark, figuratively that is, and say, "Look at him. He came here with nothing." And there I was, somewhat older than him, with virtually nothing. But I've always been fond of Mark, especially since that time when I was trying to raise money to put on one of my plays. He took me to lunch at the very fashionable Russian Tea Room and offered to put up a substantial sum. He does things with style and he does have a sense of humor. So there I was in Mark's luxurious living room, having just finished an excellent dinner prepared by his charming wife. She'd been called away by her mother who wasn't feeling very well, and I was wondering what we were going to talk about.

*(NATHAN has entered the living room. HE walks about inspecting the decor, books, objects on the shelves.
MARK enters a moment later.)*

MARK: Sit down, sit down. So what's your pleasure?

NATHAN: Liquor's not one of them.

MARK: Come on, come on. I can't drink alone.

NATHAN: You can, of course, but I hope you don't.

MARK: So what can I give you?

NATHAN: (*HE sighs.*) Oh, Mark, Mark, Mark.

MARK: Come on. No fooling around. This is serious business.

NATHAN: An after dinner drink is serious business? All right, all right. What have you got to offer?

MARK: You like something sweet?

NATHAN: Always.

MARK: So, let me see...

NATHAN: My God, you've certainly got a collection there.

MARK: How about some Kaluha. That's like coffee.

NATHAN: Sounds good to me.

MARK: With a little milk maybe?

NATHAN: Is that the way you drink it?

MARK: Depends on how you like it.

NATHAN: So let there be milk. Is that a refrigerator back there? Good Lord!

MARK: We don't fool around here.

NATHAN: So how did you get two beautiful daughters? What are you gonna have?

MARK: I live simple. (*HE holds up a bottle of Scotch.*)

NATHAN: Scotch?! You and Marty!

MARK: We know how to live.

NATHAN: True.

MARK: L'chaim!

NATHAN: L'chaim!

(THEY drink.)

NATHAN: This is nice.

MARK: Would I give you something that isn't nice? So, when are you going to Seattle?

NATHAN: The end of the month.

MARK: And you'll get to see Ralph?

NATHAN: On the way back. I've gotta change planes in San Francisco so I arranged for two and a half hours. We'll have dinner in the airport.

MARK: You going for one of your plays?

NATHAN: No. I'm a member of the Literary Managers and Dramaturgs of America. Not that I'm a literary manager. I'm an associate member. They have a conference every year in different parts of the country, so I get to see the country and I get to meet all the people who keep sending back my scripts. You'll be out that way, too.

MARK: First I go to Dallas.

NATHAN: Right. Do these trade shows really pay off?

MARK: It's an investment.

NATHAN: I never think in terms of jewelry but, I guess, a lot of people wear jewelry and, I guess, a lot of people need wedding rings.

MARK: Thanks God!

NATHAN: This room is new, isn't it?

MARK: It's bigger.

NATHAN: That's right. You had the place remodeled. It's really nice. One of these days I'm gonna buy myself a set of encyclopedias. What's Anne up to now? She graduated, didn't she?

MARK: Last year.

NATHAN: And she passed her exam, I hear. So she's a full blooded CPA. You must be very proud of her. And Isabella?

MARK: Isabella's going to be a lawyer.

NATHAN: You're kidding. Little Isabella? She was always so quiet.

MARK: When she has to speak she's got a mouth.

NATHAN: So what is she doing this summer?

MARK: Two jobs!

NATHAN: Two jobs, no less.

MARK: Two jobs. Part time she works for Senator Harvey. For that she doesn't get paid.

NATHAN: What does she do?

MARK: She works in the office. Answers phones. Like that. And for that she gets credit at school.

NATHAN: And the other job?

MARK: The other job she works for me. That's the paying job.

NATHAN: You'll be having two weddings soon.

MARK: Don't remind me.

NATHAN: Kids cost a lost.

MARK: You telling me? How much does it cost to put on a play?

NATHAN: In New York, you mean? On Broadway? A straight play...close to a million.

MARK: Phew!

NATHAN: Ridiculous, isn't it? A musical, five million. And tickets? Forget it! And all they're doing on Broadway these days is musicals.

MARK: And Off Broadway?

NATHAN: To produce a show? A hundred thousand. Two, three. I suppose it could be done for less, depending on the cast etcetera. However there are regional theatres. That's where it's really at now.

MARK: What about Denmark?

NATHAN: You mean Holland? No, unfortunately. No more trips to Holland.

MARK: You had...how many plays there?

NATHAN: Two.

MARK: What happened to them?

NATHAN: Well, one of them was done by a theatre in Belgium, very successfully, and translated into French as well. I was sure we had a production in Paris. And then, of course, it would go to London and from there to New York. Broadway!

MARK: So what happened?

NATHAN: The Paris production never came off.

MARK: Why?

NATHAN: Why, Mark, why? Money! It's the answer to everything.

MARK: If it's a good play it's a good investment. No?

NATHAN: I should think so, yes. But it's a fact, proven historically, that not many people know a good play when they read it. You take a piece of jewelry. You look at it and you can tell.

MARK: I tell you something. I design a ring, a beautiful ring. Nothing! I have this other one, a plain ring. It's my best seller.

NATHAN: People have their taste in their ass. Look at the movies. The more bloodshed the better. There's no room for literature. I mean centuries from now what will we leave behind? The Greeks are remembered for their art. What will we be remembered for?

MARK: How about a little more Kaluha?

NATHAN: So let it be a little more Kaluha. Did you know Uncle Jack? My mother's brother?

MARK: I think I met him once.

NATHAN: If you met him you'd remember him. Uncle Jack was a miserable man. He made everyone around him miserable. He should have been a writer. He had that sort of a mind, that sort of a temperament. But he had a family to support so he became a furrier and then he opened a grocery store.

(MARK has poured some Kaluha.)

NATHAN: Thank you.

MARK: A little milk?

NATHAN: So let it be a little milk. Thank you. We go through life and we know nothing about one another. I always thought that one day my father and I would sit down and talk and we'd get to know one another. And now he's gone. Take you, for example. We're strangers. We meet at family gatherings, we chat superficially. I come to your bat-mitzvahs, your lavish bat-mitzvahs. How much do those things cost, by the way?

MARK: Don't ask.

NATHAN: At least ten thousand. And weddings? Twenty five thousand. Thirty thousand. Wedding dresses cost, at least, a thousand. It's decadence, Mark, decadence. People in China are starving, my mother used to say. I envy you, Mark. You have everything.

MARK: Everything?

NATHAN: Is there anything you want that you don't have? If you want something you just go out and buy it.

MARK: That's what's good about this country, no?

NATHAN: There is inequality.

MARK: There's also opportunity.

NATHAN: How's everyone in Israel?

MARK: Fine. Everyone's fine.

NATHAN: I would really love to go there one of these days.

MARK: Why don't you go?

NATHAN: It's expensive.

MARK: Once you get there you wouldn't have to spend a penny. You go here, you go there. You should go.

NATHAN: One of these days. You were born in Israel, weren't you? Or were you?

MARK: I was born in Poland.

NATHAN: That's right. How long were you in Israel?

MARK: I was there four years. From nineteen fifty seven to nineteen sixty one.

NATHAN: It must have been exciting.

MARK: If you can imagine, coming from Poland, where you had to watch your every step.

NATHAN: Why was that?

MARK: Poland was Communist.

NATHAN: Eastern Poland?

MARK: All Poland...was under the Communist Regime.

NATHAN: Yes, of course. Maybe I ought to write a play about you. You certainly had a fascinating life. Would you have any objection?

MARK: No.

NATHAN: I'd have to find some sort of a hook. Why don't you tell me about Poland? This was after the war.

MARK: After the war Poland was Communist.

NATHAN: And you had to be careful.

MARK: You had to be careful. You had to watch how you act. If I was sitting with you, for example, and I wasn't sure exactly how well do I know you and I express myself on certain political or social views... Okay? Which was not in line with the official policy of the government, then you could go to the police or to the Communist Party headquarters and say, "Listen, Mark's views are against our regime."

NATHAN: Do you know of any experiences where people were arrested?

MARK: Oh, yes. Quite a few.

NATHAN: Among the Jewish community?

MARK: Not as much as we were sometimes in the Polish community because, basically, the Jews realized the circumstances and they just kept their mouth shut.

NATHAN: What about religion? The Jews, for example?

MARK: There was a "shul" made from a little room in a house. Usually the services was only on the holidays, the big holidays. Like Saturday services...there was no Saturday services because under the Communist regime, starting forty-eight, forty-nine, they didn't believe in religion.

NATHAN: What about churches?

MARK: Churches, too, to a degree. Though Polish people were going to the church, they weren't looking favorably on people who practiced religion.

NATHAN: Tell me about Israel.

MARK: Well, if you can imagine, to see everywhere...Jews. A whole country just for Jews. The cops, the mailmen, the government...everything Jewish. It was like a miracle.

NATHAN: You didn't speak any Hebrew, did you?

MARK: Not a word.

NATHAN: How did you manage?

MARK: Well, I understood Jewish. I didn't speak it but I understood. And many people were speaking Polish. So they sent me to a kibbutz so I could learn Hebrew.

NATHAN: What was that like?

MARK: Was very hard work. Up in the middle of the night and you worked, all day long. I was there a month.

NATHAN: That's all?

MARK: That was enough.

NATHAN: You could just leave?

MARK: Sure.

NATHAN: No problem?

MARK: No problem.

NATHAN: So what did you do?

MARK: It wasn't easy. I tell you, the social life, everything was fine but...

NATHAN: Economically?

MARK: Economically was very hard.

NATHAN: What was the standard of living like?

MARK: Food was no problem. Basic items you could go into a store and you could find, but everything else was very expensive. Very expensive. I worked in a factory, making for the planes, how you call it...?

NATHAN: Ammunition?

MARK: Ammunition. Shells! I didn't see no future there. I asked myself, "Was I gonna spend my whole life in this factory, if they didn't kick me out? And if they did, where was I gonna go?" So I was thinking to go to America.

NATHAN: Aha! That must have been quite a big step, leaving your mother and your sister.

MARK: And I didn't speak English.

NATHAN: Not at all?

MARK: Not one word.

NATHAN: From the frying pan into the fire.

MARK: So to speak.

NATHAN: Who brought you over?

MARK: Aunt Beatrice. She made out the papers and I came over.

NATHAN: You flew?

MARK: I came by boat and, since I couldn't speak English, I couldn't speak to anyone. I was all alone and when I got here I didn't know what to do, where to go. So I watch all the people. They go off the boat, I go off, too, and I come into this big hall.

NATHAN: That must have been Ellis Island.

MARK: No

NATHAN: Where was it?

MARK: I don't know, but it wasn't Ellis Island.

NATHAN: So, anyway...

MARK: So anyway I'm standing there in this big hall. People are leaving. I don't know what I'm going to do. Where do I go? Suppose no one comes for me? Here I am in a strange country. I don't speak the language. I don't know anyone here. Finally I see this young man. He's approaching me and he's smiling. Who is this? Do I know him? Does he know me? He's making gestures. I don't know what he's saying. Finally he pulls out a picture from his pocket and he shows me the picture. It's me. That's my picture. And he's saying, "Singer, Singer." What's a singer? And then I remember, "Oh, Singer" That's my aunt's name. Singer." And he's looking, looking. What is he looking for? And he points to my suitcase. Oh, he wants me to take my suitcase so I pick up my suitcase and I follow him and he takes me to customs. What do I know from customs? And then we're through with customs and he takes me...and there's Uncle Hymie.

NATHAN: My father.

MARK: Your father.

NATHAN: Did you recognize him?

MARK: From pictures.

NATHAN: That young man, was it Izzy?

MARK: That was Ralph. Cousin Ralph.

NATHAN: Oh, Ralph. I remember my father went over to Poland when his father was dying. That must have been in the early thirties.

MARK: I was a baby then. But my mother told me that when Grandpa was dying Uncle Hymie came to see him.

NATHAN: I keep forgetting.

MARK: That we're related?

NATHAN: They sent me these gifts, you know, my grandparents. Our grandparents. My initials made of metal and it holds a pen and a letter opener. And they also sent me this beautifully embroidered velvet bag for "tvillin". And also a set of "tvillin". Our lives today are so different now.

MARK: That was a long time ago.

NATHAN: I never did get to know my father. He spent most of his time in the store. That's when he had the saloon. I gathered that he used to drink quite a bit. My mother used to get very upset but I was never really aware of it.

MARK: I think he used to drink already when he was in Poland.

MARK: Oh?

MARK: My mother used to tell a story about your father. They had the farm and on the farm they had chickens and your father used to feed the chickens. So he found himself a game.

NATHAN: Oh?

MARK: He was going and taking some...at that time probably vodka, I imagine, and mixing it with a little water and he used to give it to the chickens. And Grandfather, you know, sees these chickens going wild.

NATHAN: Yeah?

MARK: Something wrong with those chickens. He couldn't figure out what's wrong with those chickens. What's going on here?

NATHAN: Yeah?

MARK: One time. Second time. The chickens don't lay any eggs and those chickens were jumping and they were running. What could it be with those chickens? "Let me see. Let me watch those chickens and see what's happening." All of a sudden he sees you father giving them something to drink, and he had so much fun, you father, looking from the side somewhere, seeing the chickens were going crazy.

NATHAN: That's funny.

MARK: My mother could never forget that. She was always laughing.

NATHAN: That is funny. So many relatives I never knew. Let me see, there was my father and your mother, of course and Beatie and Tillie and Aunt Gertie.

MARK: And Perchik.

NATHAN: He was the one that was killed in the war. The first World War, that is.

MARK: That was Wolf.

NATHAN: Who was Perchik?

MARK: He was the youngest son. He lived with my mother and our grandparents.

NATHAN: Perchik? I never heard of him. What did he do?

MARK: He was very religious. He spent his time in "shul", studying and praying. And there was also Malke and Rivka and maybe one other sister.

NATHAN: My mother had a Malke, I know.

MARK: Malke and Rivka, they were also sisters. Malke was the youngest.

NATHAN: Isn't that something?! Malke and Rivka. I never even knew they existed. My parents never talked much about their life in Poland. Well, my father never talked at all, and my mother... She had this awful prejudice.

MARK: (*Clarifying*) Why?

NATHAN: I mean this was even before the Holocaust. I guess there must have been a tremendous amount of prejudice against the Jews.

MARK: And when you parents were there there were still pogroms.

NATHAN: I guess so. Where were we? When you came over you met my father for the first time.

MARK: I met your father and he took me to meet your mother and later he took me back to Aunt Beatrice. I met Aunt Beatrice and Uncle Izzy when they came home from the store. At that time they had a grocery store. I think it was on Bergen street. And they lived on Hillside Avenue. That's where I stayed.

NATHAN: It must have been lonely for you.

MARK: It was difficult. In Israel I could go, I could come. I could take a bus. Here I couldn't even take a bus. I could take a bus, but it was hard to get directions. Ralph was home then and I spent some time with him.

NATHAN: What was your impression of the family? This family you were meeting for the very first time?

MARK: Well, I'll tell you..I wasn't...disappointed. I'm trying to think of the right word. Surprised. To tell you the truth, you have this picture...America! Rich! Big!

NATHAN: Glamorous.

MARK: Glamorous, sophisticated.

NATHAN: Like you see in the movies.

MARK: And then, when I met Aunt Beatrice I expected...I don't know, a lady. A grand lady! A queen!

NATHAN: She must have been in her fifties.

MARK: Oh, more.

NATHAN: Sixty?

MARK: At least.

NATHAN: You never saw Beatie when she was young. She was a beauty. That was my first crush.

MARK: My mother told me when Beatrice left to go to America she was a beautiful young girl.

NATHAN: And then after she got married she got heavy. That was a great disappointment to me.

MARK: She sent me a picture of Phyllis, I remember. On the beach in a suit. That was really something. A knockout! So when I met Phyllis I expected...

NATHAN: A movie star. A sexpot.

MARK: At least.

NATHAN: She was married then.

MARK: Oh, yes. And Michael was a little boy. Anyway when I met her she was... I don't want to knock anybody. That's not my intention. But she was just an ordinary person.

NATHAN: And Tillie?

MARK: She was the most outspoken, the most modern.

NATHAN: A force of nature. What was your impression of America in general?

MARK: Here in America, if you wanted to go somewhere, everybody had a car. In Israel if you had a car you must be...God knows what. Here you went into a store you were overwhelmed, there was so much.

NATHAN: But our family lived very simply.

MARK: That was the surprise.

NATHAN: So you stayed with Beatie.

MARK: I stayed with Aunt Beatrice. I had nothing to do so Aunt Tillie said, "Come into the store. You have nothing to do so you'll help out in the store." At that time they had a clothing store. So Uncle Hymie took me to the store, but I saw right away that was not for me.

NATHAN: Herb was there.

MARK: Herb was there and there was nothing for me to do. So I was looking around, looking around for a job. I wanted to work in a gas station but they said, "You can't speak English. Somebody comes for gas, you don't understand."

NATHAN: You had to learn the language.

MARK: I had to learn the language. At that time Herb's wife, Alma, belonged to the Cabana Club, the swim club, you know, and she said, "There's a lady there who comes from Poland and her husband has a business and he might have a job for you. She's going to speak to her husband and I'll talk to her next week." I got all excited. So finally a week later the woman spoke to her husband and I had an interview. One day your father drove me over to the factory.

NATHAN: What sort of business was this?

MARK: The jewelry business.

NATHAN: The one you're in now.

MARK: Right. So your father took me there and I met the man and we talked and he said, "All right. You're here from Poland. You don't speak the language. You have no job. We'll give you a chance. We'll pay you fifty dollars a week, the minimum wage, and if you want we'll see what's what." Fine. "So, I'll tell you what. This is July. We're closing for vacation. Come back the beginning August and we'll start you out." Fine! Great! I had a job. My first job in America. Comes August Uncle Hymie drives me over to the factory and I start work.

NATHAN: What did you do?

MARK: Everything. Whatever they wanted me to do. I swept the floor. I cleaned the place. They wanted coffee, I ran out for coffee. And then there was nothing to do they said, "Watch how they work on the machines." And they said to the workers, "Show him how to work the machines." So I watched and I learned. I worked one machine. I worked another one. Cutting rings on the lathe, engraving. Like that.

NATHAN: And you were living with Beatie.

MARK: I was working already, making... I was clearing thirty, forty dollars a week, so I said to myself, "It's time now to find a place." Meanwhile at night I was going to Americanization class three nights a week, two hours. The school on Clinton Avenue. And I asked around. "You know of an apartment? You know of an apartment?" "Oh, yes." "How much?" "Seventy, eighty dollars a month." Whew! Seventy, eighty dollars a month. I couldn't afford seventy, eighty dollars a month. Finally I asked a woman, "You know of an apartment maybe?" "I don't know of an apartment," she said, "But I tell you, I have a one family house. I finished up the attic. You can have a room in the attic if you want." "How much?" "All right," she said, "Pay me thirty dollars a month." Thirty dollars a month I could afford. "But tell me, maybe you know where I can get a little refrigerator?" "What do you need a refrigerator? I'll make a place for you in my refrigerator. How much room do you need? You need a little milk, some bread? You put it in my refrigerator. And if you wanna make some coffee in the morning, I let you use my kitchen." Great! Fine! So I moved into the attic. But it was hot! In the summer it was hot! I tossed and I turned. I couldn't sleep. I was bathing in my own sweat. But I had a place to stay.

NATHAN: So you were working in this factory.

MARK: I was working in the factory and I was watching how everything was doing. Came the end of the day everybody was rushing home. Where was I gonna go? So then when I worked the machines they let me work late sometimes and I made a little overtime, and that was good.

NATHAN: How long were you there?

MARK: I was there ten years, but after four, five years I was doing extra things all the time, and little by little they began to depend on me more and more. At first they didn't say anything. "Mark can lock up. Turn out the lights. Take care of this, take care of that." Finally one day, this was four, five years later, they called everyone together and they made an announcement. "Mark is gonna be the manager." Fine! More money and I was boss. At first there was a feeling of...opposition, from the people that were there longer but, after a while, it was all right everything.

NATHAN: What did you do as manager?

MARK: Everything. I ran the place. I bought the materials. I decided which orders came first. I spoke to the salesmen.

NATHAN: And the partners? What did they do?

MARK: Nothing. They sat in the office and bull-shitted. Sometimes they went out to meetings, drumming up business. And so everything is fine. So I was there five, six years. But then I began to think, "Where can I go from here? If I stay here this is the highest I can go. I'm manager now. All right, but for how long? Because I began to see that maybe things was gonna change."

NATHAN: What made you think that?

MARK: All right. One day one of the bosses brought in his two sons and he introduces me. "These are my sons and they're gonna learn the business, 'cause one day they'll take over. Meanwhile you show them everything so they'll know. Of course, you'll still be in charge." I said to myself, "Sure. I'll be in charge...for now. But I'm the stranger."

NATHAN: And they're the sons.

MARK: They're the sons. So I start to look around. And I'm taking home work at night; designing rings so if somebody wanted something I had something to show them. Meanwhile, when I came in in the morning...I came in seven o'clock...a man used to come in and he'd bring some work for the men to do on one of the machines, some engraving. So when this man was coming in I said to one of the men, "Why don't you introduce me? This man comes in every day, so maybe I'll meet him" "Sure." So the next time they introduced me. His name was Goldschmidt and we were talking. "How are you? What do you do?" "Oh, I have a little shop and I make wedding rings. If you wanna, stop by and say hello." So I said, "Sure. Why not?" So a few days later I drive over there and I take a look. It's a small operation...this man and two other men and that was it. So one day I see him. "How are you? How is everything?" "I'm retiring." "You're retiring?" "I'm retiring. I've worked all my life. In a few months I'll be sixty five. It's enough already. Meanwhile my father-in-law says to me..."

NATHAN: How did you meet Luba, by the way?

MARK: Ah! Maybe I should go back. I'm living in this room in the attic on the corner of Hawthorne Avenue and Clinton Place and I had this friend from Israel. I used to visit him in New York and he used to visit me. So one day he came over and I needed some bread so we went over to Silvers, the bakery shop there.

NATHAN: Yes, I know Silvers.

MARK: And there behind the counter there's this cute little girl, and me and my friend we made some remarks in Polish. You know how men joke when they see a pretty girl. Anyway I paid for the bread and we left and I didn't think anything. Next week I thought, "That was a very cute girl. I'll go see what's what." I went back and she's standing there behind the counter so I started a conversation, and she let me know that she understood Polish. Uh, oh! Naturally I was very embarrassed and I left. Then, let me see, I wanted to move already. That room in the attic in the summer, I had enough. I was making more money now, a hundred ten dollars a week or so. I have to find myself a real apartment. So I was talking to this man and he had a three family house and the apartment on the third floor was empty. "How much?" I got him down to seventy dollars a month. So now I had an apartment...a bedroom, a kitchen, a bathroom, so that was good. I'm living in this apartment. One day I'm

coming out of the house and I'm meeting these people, a man and his wife. "Hello. What are you doing here?" "Oh, I live here." "Really? We live here, too, right next door." We knew each other but we couldn't think from where. Finally we remember. Americanization class. "So now we're neighbors, drop by. We'll have some coffee." "Sure, sure." I never dropped by. One day I come out of the house and there they were with their daughter. "Hello, how are you? This is our daughter." "Hello. How do you do."

NATHAN: That was Luba.

MARK: The girl from the bakery.

NATHAN: Did she know you?

MARK: I'm sure.

NATHAN: But she didn't say anything.

MARK: She didn't say anything and I, for sure, didn't say anything. So they said, "Come over, come over. Why don't you come over?" And I said, "Sure, sure." I didn't go. So one day, I'm sitting in my apartment and the phone rings. "What are you doing? Why should you sit alone? Come over, come over. We'll have some coffee. Come over." What did I have to lose? I went over.

NATHAN: And that's when you started dating Luba.

MARK: That was the beginning of the romance.

NATHAN: How long did you date?

MARK: We went together a year or so, maybe a little more.

NATHAN: And then you popped the question.

MARK: Actually I wasn't in such a rush to get married.

NATHAN: Then how...?

MARK: Aha! That's a story. One day I came to work. Suddenly I had a terrible pain. I couldn't move. So one of the owners said, "Let me take you to the hospital and we'll see what's what." They took me to the hospital and I'm sitting there, waiting and waiting in terrible pain. Finally I see the doctor and he's examining me and they gotta take tests. They gotta take tests. So they put me in the hospital in this big room with twenty people and I'm laying there. I couldn't move. I couldn't call.

NATHAN: What was wrong with you?

MARK: Gall stones. So finally I'm feeling a little better and I call Aunt Beatrice. "Where are you? What happened?" "I'm in the hospital." "What are you doing in the hospital?" So they came to visit me there. And it happened that when Aunt Tillie came Luba was there and Aunt Tillie says, "You have to marry her."

NATHAN: She said this in front of Luba?

MARK: No, she was gone already. "You have to marry her?" "What are you talking about?" "Don't worry. I'll take care of everything." So she starts to make arrangements. I said, "Aunt Tillie, what are you doing? What are you doing?" "You're not a kid anymore. You gonna live all your life alone?" "Aunt Tillie, come on!" "You'll marry her." And that was that.

NATHAN: You proposed?

MARK: I proposed and she accepted. And that was really something. "Come on, come on. Don't worry. Everything will be fine!"

NATHAN: Where did you go on your honeymoon?

MARK: We went to the Nevele. I was told that that was the place to go. That's in the Catskills.

NATHAN: Yes, I know.

MARK: We stayed there a week and then we moved into our apartment.

NATHAN: That must have been where I visited you. In your first apartment.

MARK: On Harding Terrace.

NATHAN: Right, right. So you had a family now.

MARK: So to speak.

NATHAN: And you were working for this first company. And the boss introduced you to his sons.

MARK: The boss introduced me to his sons.

NATHAN: And you were expecting to be ousted.

MARK: Not ousted exactly.

NATHAN: But you saw the writing on the wall.

MARK: I knew if I stayed it wouldn't be the same.

NATHAN: So your father-in-law came to you.

MARK: At this time he was having a clothing store in New York, a Hundred and Sixteenth Street somewhere. Sports clothes. Things like that. So he says to me, "Why don't I look around. I'll find you a store and I'll set you up in business and you'll have a store there, too." I didn't like the idea at all, but comes to worse maybe I should do it. "Let me look around," he said. "You'll make money and this and that." "I'm not for it. I don't want it." "Don't say it, don't say it." "What do I know from clothes?" "What did I know when I started? You buy, you sell." So I didn't say anything and all the time I was thinking...

NATHAN: About the guy with the factory.

MARK: Right. All of a sudden my father-in-law says to me, "I got a store. A very nice store and I have a partner for you. There'll be the two of you." I said, "Wait. Don't push it. I'm not ready for this type of operation." "Come on, Don't talk foolish." "All right. let me see. We'll talk about it." Meanwhile I went quick back to this other guy.

NATHAN: The one that's gonna retire.

MARK: And I said to him, "Why are you retiring? Don't retire. Semi retire. You don't wanna work, sell me the place." He said, "Uh, uh! I won't sell to anybody anything." "But you gonna close it. You close everything and what? At least you get some money." "No, I'm not selling." I said, "Why? give me a good reason why you don't wanna do that." "I've been in the business in this place for thirty years. All these years my product is the best. I have a great reputation. I'm gonna sell the place and somebody's gonna get...mess this thing up and the name is gonna go down the drain." I said, "What?! Who's gonna mess anything up? Why can't it be done the same way as you did?" And we start talking and talking. I say, 'Listen, why don't you become a partner? We become partners. You get some money. You keep yourself busy. What are you gonna sit home, do nothing? It's no good for you.' And so on and so on. Finally he says, "Okay. All right. Let's go. You wanna? I agree. Let's go into partners." He had a father, you know, which was ninety years old, which was Goldschmidt, the company which I have now. And the old Goldschmidt, his father...thanks to his father, I think, the deal was made. Because the father came to him and said, "You stupid, why don't you go and do something? Why you sitting here? Take a look at you place. If I was in you age I would change this whole thing." And he starts cursing him out and he said, "You go and do it. Let the guy come in, improve. Do something with you." And he kind of encouraged him that he agreed to go and sell this thing. So now he says he wants to sell. "So how much do you want for this place?" So he gives me a number. I said, "Fine. No problem." I have no money.

NATHAN: How much did he want?

MARK: For the inventory he wanted twenty thousand dollars. That time I didn't have not even close to twenty thousand dollars. Beside the twenty thousand I figure if I go in there I can't work under those conditions and do whatever he's doing. I have to improve this, otherwise it's a thrown out money. We talking about money here. To make this I must have, at least, a hundred thousand dollars to move this thing a little bit. So I go back to my father-in-law and I tell him, "Listen, I don't want any store. Forget about the store. I'm not going to the store, it's not for me. But I have a deal here. I can buy this place. I know what I'm doing here. I feel more comfortable, and if you wanna help me why don't you help me in here? Go partners here, if you want it." "I don't know. I cannot do it because if I go partners I have an agreement with my partner in my store that whatever I do he has to do. Any venture we

have we have to do together. That's the agreement we have." So I said, "Fine. Take him, too. Let him be a partner; so you and him be one partner." So he says, "Let me talk to him." I said, "Fine. Talk to him." Okay. So they talk and his partner says, "Hmmm! Jewelry business." This guy gets excited and he says, "Okay. Let's go to the jewelry factory." Then I thought to myself, if I go myself then I need somebody to work, to help me out. And it happened I had a friend of mine working there with me.

NATHAN: In the old place?

MARK: In the old place. He was working on the machines. So I said to him, "Listen, I'm going into business for myself. You wanna go? I give you a piece of the action. Why don't you go?" He said, "Sure! Why not?" Okay. So I put this whole package together. Five partners. But when we got together I said, "Listen, I organized this whole thing. Now I do not ask for fifty or fifty one percent here. But I want thirty three percent." "But you're not putting any money. You're only putting five thousand dollars." "So, okay. You take the money and put in, and if there's nobody here to do it, the money's not worth it. So for my efforts, for my everything, I want the percentage." Okay. They agree. So they split the rest of it. We went in. We opened the place. Goldschmidt was staying with us and we start. I bought some machinery and everything. And we had very hard times. In the beginning we had very hard times, and they start not liking what's going on there.

NATHAN: Who?

MARK: The other partners. So the first guy which I took with me, he said, "Mark, we friends and let's stay friends. I don't see anything here. I want out." I say, "You crazy?!" "I want out. Pay me whatever you want. I get something else." I say, "Okay, go. What can I do?" So he left. My father-in-law's partner, he says, "What kinda business you took me in? This business is not making money. This business is losing money. I want out." "What do you mean, you want out?" "I want out!" Okay. My father-in-law says, "What I'm going to do?" I say, "Let him stay out. I don't care. I don't have money to give him." So for the sake of everything, between me and you, my father-in-law gave him the money and got rid of him. So we left three of us. After a year or so Benny says...

NATHAN: Benny?

MARK: Goldschmidt, the owner. "I wanna retire. I don't wanna do anymore. It's not for me. I say, "Okay. I buy you out."

NATHAN: Were you able to?

MARK: No. But I tell him, "You have to give me terms. Give me terms and in a period of time I pay you out. If not, stay. Take your choice." "No, no, no. I want out. I agree on the terms." So I took him out. So we're left, me and my father-in-law...and I'm still here.

NATHAN: It started to pick up.

MARK: Then I start rolling this whole thing. Change the whole thing. I didn't have to answer to anybody anymore each time I made a move. Wasn't good nobody could scream at me. So it was a good decision. I was lucky and, thanks God, I'm here today. I need a refill. Come on.

NATHAN: Mark, you're gonna make me drunk.

MARK: Come on! That little bit?

NATHAN: That's all it takes.

MARK: You like something else? A little Scotch maybe?

NATHAN: Uch! A little Kaluha maybe. Just a drop.

MARK: Now you talking.

NATHAN: That's plenty.

MARK: A little milk?

(NATHAN nods and MARK pours a little milk. The telephone rings.)

MARK: That must be Luba. Excuse me. *(HE picks up the phone.)* Hello? I see. Just a minute. Let me ask him. *(To NATHAN)* It's Luba.

She wants to stay a little longer with her mother. You anxious to get home.

NATHAN: Not really. It's just that the last bus is around ten thirty, I think.

MARK: Don't worry about the bus. Listen, why don't you stay over? We have plenty of room. Tomorrow is Saturday. What are you gonna do? You'll get up. You'll have a nice breakfast and I'll take you into the city. You'll stay over. (*On the phone.*) Listen, Nathan's going to stay over. I'll put him in Anne's room. All right, all right. Yes. All right. (*HE hangs up.*) The bed isn't made up in Anne's room. You'll be in Isabella's room. I have all my instructions. So what do you think?

NATHAN: About the play? I don't know. You were in Poland during the war, weren't you? I remember you had a pretty rough time of it, hiding out from the Nazis.

MARK: Oh, yes.

NATHAN: Why don't we talk in the morning? If that's all right with you.

MARK: Fine, fine.

NATHAN: Do you happen to have a tape recorder?

MARK: Somewhere I have one. I have to look.

NATHAN: And a couple of cassettes?

MARK: I'll pick some up. Maybe you'd like something before you go to bed.

NATHAN: No, no. I'm fine.

MARK: You sure?

NATHAN: I'm fine.

MARK: You know where the bathroom is?

NATHAN: Right.

MARK: And Isabella's room is the second one on the right when you come up the stairs.

NATHAN: Right, right.

MARK: I have some pajamas but I don't think they'll fit you.

NATHAN: That's all right. I'll be fine.

MARK: We'll talk in the morning.

NATHAN: Right, right. Good night, Mark.

MARK: Good night. Sleep tight.

(NATHAN goes off. MARK sighs, pours himself some Scotch then sits, lost in thought, as the lights come down.)

ACT II

(The following morning. NATHAN enters, picks up the phone and dials.)

NATHAN: It's Nathan Gold. Any messages? Thank you.

(MARK enters as NATHAN hangs up.)

MARK: You anxious to get home?

NATHAN: No, no, no. I was just checking for messages.

MARK: Your writing maybe?

NATHAN: That's all right. I can write in the afternoon. Don't you usually go into work on Saturday?

MARK: Half a day sometimes, but the girl is there and it's usually quiet on Saturday.

NATHAN: How's Luba's mother?

MARK: Much better.

(The phone rings.)

MARK: Excuse me. *(HE picks up the phone.)* Hello? Hey! Like the weather. The sun is shining I'm fine. What time? Maybe later in the afternoon. I'll call you. *(HE hangs up.)* My tennis partner.

NATHAN: You still play tennis?

MARK: I'm taking lessons now.

NATHAN: We can do this some other time, if you like.

MARK: No, no, no. You here. Let's go. You want some more coffee maybe?

NATHAN: No, no. I'm fine. Let me ask you this. After the war, was there any anti-Semitism in Poland?

MARK: Oh, yes.

NATHAN: There was?

MARK: Oh, yes. It wasn't so open though. Under Communism there couldn't be any discrimination, officially, that is.

NATHAN: But privately?

MARK: Privately it was still the same. For example. I was going to school in the beginning after the war. Okay? This was probably already when I was in the seventh grade. And the kids started calling me, "Jew! Hey, Jew!" One time I remember. It was in the winter. They said, "Why don't we make snowballs and fight?" All right. So we went and we were fighting. Okay? All of a sudden I was left by myself on one side. And instead just to have a snowball they took stones, put snow around it so when I was hit with a snow ball all of a sudden I got a bruise. So I start running away. But this was becoming more and more so I was figuring, "Well, we have to put a stop to it somehow."

NATHAN: Yeah?

MARK: And the only way to stop this was to create a fight between me and the strongest guy in the class. So if I beat him maybe I'm going to get a little respect. I'm not a weak little Jew. So I created a fight and one day all the kids were saying, "Okay. This Jew is going to get beat up this time." So we went out after school. We set a place and we start fighting. And I was lucky. After having, you know, being beat up pretty good and bleeding, I beat the guy.

NATHAN: Uhuh!

MARK: So after I beat him then all of a sudden they stopped this every day abuse. It started slowly we became friends and it was gone the subject for being a Jew. I must tell you. I'll never forget. One time, I remember I was sitting in the movie. At that time they showed, you know, newsreels. If you remember...the Suez War?

NATHAN: Not really, no.

MARK: Egypt closed the canal...

NATHAN: Right, right.

MARK: And England and France sent planes. And Israel was the only one. They sent an army. I'll never forget. I was sitting in the movie. Of course, at that time in Poland was Russian propaganda. England and the Allies were killers, imperialists and so on. So the newsreel comes on. First the planes flying over and then came the tanks, Israeli tanks. And finally the Israeli army. Israeli soldiers...marching. And then from nowhere, like from nowhere in the dark, applause. And then when we came out of the theatre they were talking.

NATHAN: The Poles?

MARK: The Poles, yes, the Poles. They were used to seeing Jews in black coats with side curls, you know. And there they saw blond, healthy looking guys. "I never seen a Jew like that," they said. "These Jews are normal people."

NATHAN: Did most of the Jews wear side curls?

MARK: In the big cities, not so much. But in the small town where I lived the Jews dressed differently. The black coat. The side curls.

NATHAN: So they were pretty obvious.

MARK: Not only that. Most Jews, since they were allowed to go only so many grades in the Polish school, they went to "cheder" then, the Jewish school, where they spoke only Jewish. So they didn't speak pure Polish.

NATHAN: They had an accent.

MARK: They had an accent.

NATHAN: So, in a way, the Jews created their own ghetto.

MARK: For protection, sure.

NATHAN: I see you found the tape recorder. Did you get the cassettes?

MARK: Right here. You think you can work this machine?

NATHAN: It's similar to the one I have at home. Let's see. (*HE inserts the cassettes into the tape recorder.*) Okay, let's start. So, how old were you when the war broke out?

MARK: When the war broke out, let's see. In nineteen thirty nine I was five and a half.

(*NATHAN pushes the recorder closer to MARK.*)

MARK: Am I speaking loud enough?

NATHAN: Yeah, that's fine. This was in Poland? Where did you live?

MARK: We lived on a farm on the outskirts of this town.

NATHAN: This was...?

MARK: Brostek.

NATHAN: Right. How did you first find out about the war?

MARK: All right. First there were airplanes flying over our head, which was very unusual. And then it was quiet for a while and then came the tanks. Later the Germans came and they took over the town and they put their own people in charge. All right? "Everything would be fine," they said and we should go on with our life, but they would need some people to do some work. I remember the Gestapo would come into our house with the Polish police and they would say, "We need today twenty men. Make an announcement they have to be here in this house." I remember the first time when they came the Jewish people were standing, the Jewish men, and the Gestapo was sitting at the table

and the Polish police was standing there. Anybody from the Jews that stepped out of line the Gestapo would come with the stick and smash him over the head.

NATHAN: The Germans?

MARK: The Germans, yes. The Gestapo.

NATHAN: In the house?

MARK: Right in front of the house. And I couldn't imagine. Why?! What's wrong? And then the truck came and took everybody out.

NATHAN: The twenty men?

MARK: The twenty men or so and they took 'em and in the evening they brought them back.

NATHAN: They brought them back?

MARK: At first they brought them back.

NATHAN: What sort of work did they do?

MARK: They took 'em somewhere on the road and they started digging ditches. Then the Gestapo came and said to my father, "You have to give up this farm. It's under German control. You have two, three days and you have to move out from this house." There was no discussion. That was it. So my father went to this Polish family in the town and they gave us a room.

NATHAN: They were friends?

MARK: Friends. Sure, friends. And they gave us a room in their house.

NATHAN: How many were you?

MARK: By this time our grandparents were gone. There was my father, my mother and me and my sister.

MARK: In one room?

MARK: That's the way you lived there. I must tell you. Part of the house where we lived was empty so my father rented it to this Polish family with eleven kids.

NATHAN: Eleven kids?!

MARK: Eleven kids. That's the kind of families they had. They had a kitchen and this one room and that's how they lived with us on our farm. And then when we moved out this man was in contact with us, 'cause my parents were very nice to him.

NATHAN: Right.

MARK: All right. So one day the commandant of the Polish police came and he tells my father he must come to the station. The Gestapo is there and they want to talk to him about the Jewish community, since my father was in charge of the Jewish community. Okay, was not the first time. So he went there. Okay? He went. He's not back. He's not back. It's late at night, he's not back. All of a sudden somebody knocks on the door. Mother opens it. It's the wife of the Polish commandant, and the woman says to my mother, "Listen, I just overheard that the Gestapo was telling my husband that they're going to come in the morning and take you and the kids. Your husband is in jail. He won't be back. And the first thing in the morning they're coming for you and the kids. They have trucks and everything ready to take all the Jews out from this town. I don't know what you have to do," she said, "But I tell you one thing, you better get the kids and run. Just run out from here 'cause that's the end."

NATHAN: That was a friend!

MARK: That was a friend.

NATHAN: 'Cause she risked her life.

MARK: She risked her life. So my mother, at night, she didn't know what to do, so she takes me and my sister and we run back to our house, to the Polish tenant there and she tells him, "Help me somehow 'cause I don't know what should I do." So he says, "Okay, you with your daughter, you take her and you go to my cousin who lives in this place. Just go there. Don't worry. You stay there till daybreak, noon time or

so and him (me) leave him here." He says, "I'm going to bring him to you to my cousin and then we going to see what to do next. Meanwhile you go, so everybody won't be together." Okay? So he says to me, "You go in there and sleep the rest of the night with the kids."

NATHAN: The eleven kids.

MARK: The eleven kids and that's it. Daybreak, all of a sudden we hear the police. The Gestapo and the Jewish police, 'cause during this period the Germans created the Jewish police. They had three, four guys and they made them policeman to work together with the Germans. So they came in there and they said to the Polish tenant, "Where are they?" He says, "Who? What? Nobody's here." "They here, they here, and if we find them you be dead." "Nobody here. There's nobody here." So they look and they look and they said, "How many kids you have?" Twelve. I have twelve kids." They start counting. Twelve kids. "Okay, okay. Where are they? On the attic?" And he turns to the men. "You go on the outside. Look in the barns and we go to the attic and the cellar." Okay? So when they walked out from the room the Polish tenant says to the kids, "All right. Right now! All of you get out! Get outside into the barn. Take the cows and take them outside to feed." So the kids, including me, we all jumped out, and he says to me, "And you," he tells me, "after the kids are outside and they take out the cows, you run. You hear me? You run!"

NATHAN: The Polish man told you this.

NATHAN: The Polish man, the tenant. "You run over in this place." And he describes the place to me. "You sit there. You don't move till I come." Okay? So we walk out. We take the cows. The Germans coming out. "What's going on here? What's all this noise here?" So he says, "Well, it's morning. We have to take out the cows. We have to start feeding them." "Okay, okay." So they looked some more. Of course, they didn't find my mother or my sister, and meanwhile I run.

NATHAN: You had friends though.

MARK: Yeah. So I ran away and I was sitting there in this...like where you grow wheat...

NATHAN: A barn?

MARK: Not a barn. A field. That's where he told me to wait. A field. And then, around noon time, he came and he said, "Let's go. I'm going to take you to your mom." So he took me to his cousin. My mom was there and he says, "I don't know where to take you, but I think," he says, "the safest thing for you would be to go to a ghetto. I hear there's this ghetto." This was in a larger town they created this ghetto.

NATHAN: What town was this?

MARK: The name of the town was Dembice. Nobody imagined what they going to do. Nobody could foresee. And he said, "Maybe they taking all these Jews and they want them to live in this one place." So he says, "You stay there. I'm going to see what's happening with you husband, and if he comes out I tell him that you there so he can join you." So my mother says, "Fine." So he took us to this ghetto which was already far away from our town and he says, "I be in touch."

NATHAN: What was it like, this ghetto? Do you remember?

MARK: Oh, yes, I remember. It was...like you would take two city block...houses, streets. Okay? And you surround it with barb wire.

NATHAN: Did you have any trouble getting in?

MARK: Getting in was no problem.

NATHAN: They must have had guards.

MARK: Oh, sure.

NATHAN: So he brought you to this ghetto.

MARK: He brought us over to the ghetto and he says, "Okay. There's the gate. You go in there." So we went to the gate and the German guard said, "Yeah? What is it?" "I'm Jewish. I wanna go in the ghetto." "All right. Go ahead." So you went into these two square blocks with barb wire. Okay? And full of people.

NATHAN: Where did you stay?

MARK: So you look around. Where am I going to stay? So you go from one house to another. "Is there room here? Is there room here? Is there room here?" Finally we found one house that had a room on the attic. Okay?

NATHAN: This was...what time of year? Do you remember?

MARK: This was like...late Spring. Nineteen forty one.

NATHAN: Did you have any clothes? What did you have?

MARK: Nothing.

NATHAN: Nothing?

MARK: Nothing.

NATHAN: Just the clothes on your back?

MARK: That was it.

NATHAN: Did you have any money?

MARK: No money, nothing.

NATHAN: How did you eat?

MARK: They had a kitchen.

NATHAN: A soup kitchen?

MARK: A soup kitchen, and they were feeding us twice a day. You stood in line with a little pot and they gave you a little soup, which was water, hot water, and a little slice of bread, which was a dry piece of bread. Okay? Once a day. The second time you got a few potatoes and another little bit of soup. And that's what you ate, day after day. Sometimes they gave you for breakfast jam, a little bit of jam with a piece of bread. And that's how you lived.

NATHAN: How long were you there?

MARK: We were there...six months. The Spring and Summer.

NATHAN: What did you have in the attic? Did you have a bed?

MARK: What bed?! We was sleeping on...

NATHAN: The floor?

MARK: There was hay or something...

NATHAN: Straw?

MARK: Straw. And we put the straw on the bottom and we lay on it. And, of course, we were sick. We had lice.

NATHAN: What kind of sickness?

MARK: Stomach. Basically diarrhea. I was sick, my mother was sick, My sister was sick. They shaved my head completely 'cause I had lice. My sister, too. We didn't have showers. Nothing.

NATHAN: And the bathroom?

MARK: The bathroom was a hole outside, like a little hole and everybody used it.

NATHAN: And you didn't change clothes for months?

MARK: For six months you wore the same thing. Sometimes you got a little water and you washed it and you hanged it out to dry.

NATHAN: What was life like in the ghetto?

MARK: People, you know, was sleeping on the streets. Everybody tried to steal from somebody something because you were hungry. So we were running in the streets and seeing somebody had a piece of bread so we stole the piece of bread. So the guy was running after us and beat us up because we stole the piece of bread. People were dying. They used to come with the cart, throw them in and take them away.

NATHAN: Who had the carts?

MARK: Jews. They came with the carts, they picked up the dead and they took them away.

NATHAN: Did the Germans come into the ghetto at all?

MARK: Oh, yes. You had Germans walking on and looking. But they just were passing, or they used to take people out to work every day. The men.

NATHAN: And the women?

MARK: No women. Just the men. They used to take them out and bring them in by the end of the day. So, if you begged sometimes, "Give me something. A piece of bread." 'Cause when they used to come in they used to bring some things.

NATHAN: The Germans?

MARK: No, no. The Jews. The Jewish workers. Sometimes they used to get something from the outside and sneak it in. We got lucky later on. I don't remember exactly. Two, three months later one of the men came into the ghetto, one of the workers. "Listen," he said, "I have a piece of paper here for you. Somebody sneaked in from the outside, a woman. She asked me if I could find you and give you this piece of paper."

NATHAN: Was this a relative?

MARK: No, no, a stranger. One of the Jewish workers when he came back one day from his work. He was looking for my mother and he said, "Somebody from the outside, a woman, gave me this little piece of paper to give to you, if I can find you." So, okay. Thank you." So she's reading and it's this Polish woman Mother knew which lived in this town.

NATHAN: Which town was this?

MARK: Dembice. The town where was the ghetto. And she wrote, "Listen, if you can, be by this place near the barb wire, and if you see there is nobody there, no Germans or something, come closer. I be on the other side, waiting for you." Okay? So mother went in there. Here is the woman. Nobody was there, so she went and the woman threw her

a loaf of bread. So we had a piece of bread to eat. And then the woman slipped her a note. Once she even stopped and talked with her. Nobody was there and the woman said, "Everybody in your town is gone. Everything is gone. Nobody left."

NATHAN: All the Jews?

MARK: "All the Jews are gone. I'll be here in two or three days. See if I be here." And that's how we start getting a little bit of food.

NATHAN: How did she know your mother?

MARK: From Brostek. This woman used to live there and now she lived in Dembice and she found out that Mother is there. And that's how we were sitting in this ghetto and living. We didn't know low long or what.

NATHAN: Did you make any friends in the ghetto?

MARK: No friends. Everybody lived for themselves.

NATHAN: Like animals.

MARK: Like animals. If you had a little water they tried to take it away. It was like...horrible. Horrible! And then it starts showing movement. This thing starts getting to be dangerous. What I mean...they going to eliminate this place. How could you see it? The men start not coming back.

NATHAN: From the work?

MARK: From the work. They took 'em out and they never came back. The barb wire they start tightening. More Germans on the outside. And they used to come in and demand more and more workers.

NATHAN: They were emptying it out little by little.

MARK: They were emptying it. So my mother sees it's no good. We have to get out from there? How? If I remember correctly, it was on a Saturday. She just told us, "You kids stay home. Don't go out nowhere. You just sit here! I'm going somewhere and you just wait." So she went.

It was late afternoon and we sitting and we sitting. She's not back. It's late at night. She's not back. All of a sudden she is here. "Mama, where were you? What is it?" She says, "Pack your things and let's get out of here. We have to get out of here." "Where we going?" "We have to stay outside." "What happened?" Okay? What happened. She went out from the ghetto through the barb wire. Somehow she found a hole somewhere. She went out to this woman, begging her if she can help. The woman said, "I don't know what to do. I don't have room." She says, "Wait till tomorrow. Maybe I can find something. I let you know in a week or something." 'Cause nobody foresees what will happen. "Give me a week. Give me two, if I can find something. This is a small town. Maybe they going to move everybody to a bigger town. Let me find out what's going on." Okay? On the way back my mother went into the ghetto through the same hole. The minute she came into the ghetto she feels behind her somebody is walking. She starts walking faster. They go faster. She's afraid to turn her head so she walks and walks. Finally she couldn't resist. She takes a look. Two Germans are in back of her. Two German soldiers. When she saw that she said, "That's it! I'm dead." So she said, "Where I'm going to run? I'm going to run to the house they going to see you kids. They going to kill me, they going to kill you. So, at least, let them kill me." So she stopped and she says to them, "What are you going after me?" So they say, "Where are you coming from?" "I'm just walking." "Where are you going?" "Wherever is my place here. I'm just living on the street." So they look at her and they say, "We saw you walking in from the outside. Where were you going?" "Okay, so I tried to get a piece of bread. I don't have anything to eat." "You sure you don't have nobody? You don't need anything?" She says, "No, no. I have my piece of bread. I'm fine." So he says, "Okay, I tell you what," he says, "Tomorrow night this thing is gone. It's nobody left here. You a brave woman and you just take it from here." And they just walked away. And she was scared, and she was walking. And she made sure, she went ten times around the building, she made sure that nobody follows her, "'Cause I'm thinking," she says, "They go after me and they going to watch were I go." So she took us out from the building and we spent the rest of the night outside, just sitting up and sleeping. And then it's Sunday. My mother walks around. And there were three other people. There was a woman and two men from Brostek also in the ghetto. So she went to them and she said, "Listen, we have to run. Let's run together." And they say, "How you going to go with kids? How we going to take you with the kids? No way." So she starts begging them, "I cannot leave the kids." "We can't do it." Okay? So she was walking,

trying to find out. All of a sudden, from nowhere, a little boy comes in and he says, "Come with me, come with me. There's somebody asking for you here." "Who's asking for me?" "I don't know. Come quick, come quick. He told me to bring you fast there." So Mother runs, comes to this one part of the barb wire.

NATHAN: This boy, was it a Jewish boy?

MARK: A Jewish boy in the ghetto. He takes her over to this barb wire and on the other side of this barb wire, who is there? The Polish tenant who lives in our house. Okay? Here he is, and he says to my mom, "Listen," he says, "I found out that tonight is the last night in this ghetto. Go quick. Bring your kids here and we have to get you out somehow. Quick, bring them here because there's no time." Mother runs quick. She brought us over there and he says, "Okay, you take the kids. Can you throw them over the barb wire, or can they climb over? I don't care what, but they have to get over 'cause," he says, "This house here, we can walk straight through, because I brought a bottle of vodka. I gave the guy who lives here and he's drunk now. I don't know for how long, so he wouldn't see what's going on." So Mother took my sister, literally took her and just threw her over the barb wire, and then she took me and she pushed me up and I jumped over, and then she jumped over.

NATHAN: And the guy caught her?

MARK: Yeah.

NATHAN: And she was...what? About three years old?

MARK: Four years maybe. So we're on the other side and he says, "Okay, what we going to do now. You listen and listen good. I'm going first by myself. You take you daughter and you walk with her." Me, he says, "And you, you walk far behind. And remember one thing." We're now in this town, you understand, this Polish town and we must walk through this town, through this whole town to the suburbs.

NATHAN: I see.

MARK: He says, "I walk myself ahead, alone. You just look where I go and follow behind me," he says to my mother. "Follow with your daughter." And me, he says, "You be the third one in the back. Walk

separate like nothing happened." He says, "Remember, if somebody stops me you just keep going. I don't care where you go, just get out of here if they stop me. Now if they going to take you and you daughter, I'm not going to turn my head even, and the same thing," he says, "If they take him, the two of you just walk."

NATHAN: Nobody knows one another.

MARK: Nobody knows each other. "Whatever happens will happen. You have to live with it." And that's how we went through this town. We got out from this town, it was late afternoon, evening already. We walked and walked and walked and walked. Finally he stopped. He says, "Okay, now we can all go together. I arranged with somebody and I'm going to take you over there. It's a Polish family. They have a house which is right next to a big forest."

NATHAN: Where was this?

MARK: This was a tiny village. The name? Jaworze.

NATHAN: Jaworze.

MARK: Jaworze. Between Dembice and Brostek. And he says, "I made arrangements. I gave them something...some money, sausages, breads and they going to keep you in this house." So we walked almost the whole night and we got to this place. Was a little farm house. One family, a couple with one child. And they said to us, "Okay, you stay on the attic. That's you place." And they took hay and they made a bed. "You stay here. You don't go up, you don't go down and that's it." Okay? He went away and he said, "I be here once in a while, if I can, and see what's what."

NATHAN: This was on the outskirts of the town.

MARK: This was all the way in nowhere. The forests in this area were tremendous. Miles and miles of forest. So we were sitting in this place the whole winter.

NATHAN: And they fed you?

MARK: Once a day we would get borscht. Borscht and potatoes.

NATHAN: What about clothes?

MARK: He brought us some clothes once. He gave us from his kids, from his wife. He brought us a coat, shoes. We took some rags and wrapped around the shoes.

NATHAN: You must have been freezing up there.

MARK: Was cold! So we were sitting between the hay and next to each other so, at least, we had body heat.

NATHAN: And this was...?

MARK: Through the whole winter. This was forty one...forty two.

NATHAN: And you didn't go out of the attic?

MARK: Once in a while, when they looked and no one was there, they told us to go down and go outside for a second, just to breathe a little air.

NATHAN: It was probably so cold you didn't want to go out.

MARK: Exactly. So we spent a whole winter there, and then in the Spring they said, "That's it. We cannot hold you anymore here. We scared something may happen." So what we did? It was right next to the forest.

NATHAN: This was in the Spring.

MARK: It was Spring already so we went into the forest and we were sitting there. And late at night we used to come to them.

NATHAN: The people you'd stayed with, the Polish family?

MARK: The Polish family. And we used to come to them late at night to get a couple of potatoes or something, so we had something to eat.

NATHAN: When you say potatoes, were they cooked?

MARK: No!

NATHAN: They were raw?

MARK: Raw! So what we used to do. We used to take the potatoes and we used to save pieces of wood, but very dry pieces, because when the pieces were very dry you had the fire but no smoke. Because we were afraid of the smoke. And then there were mushrooms, wild mushrooms and berries. One time they told us, "There are other 'Juden', other Jews here." Who were the Jews? "If you want, we find out. We let you know." "Okay." So we found there were three other Jews. It was one cousin of ours. The other one, you may know who it is. You remember Birnbaum? Chaim Birnbaum? He was related to the Thaus.

NATHAN: I'm not sure.

MARK: Anyway, he was there, and another man. So we got together with them.

NATHAN: You slept on the ground?

MARK: On the ground, yes. So when the three others were there they said, "There are more Jews here in the woods." So they brought us over. It was like a mile away. It was a whole group, about twenty people. Some of them we knew, some we didn't. So they say to my mom, "Let's get all together." So she says, "Uh, uh! Too many people. It's very easy to spot. And in a small group you don't leave so much mess behind." So they said, "Ah, come on. A woman always has all kinds of ideas." So she says to the cousins, "You wanna stay with them, stay. I stay with my kids. I wanna move from one place to another." "All right," they said, "We stay with you." Cousins, they figure, they have to be together. So we were staying together through the whole summer, near the house. But we moved all the time. Three days here. Two days there. Like a quarter of a mile. And then it was a little better because, at night, they used to go to a different village and they used to steal...like carrots or something. So we had a little more to eat. One of the cousins got very friendly with a family in one of the villages and, every so often, he used to go there, and besides, you know, he had a girl there, a Polish girl that he liked. And he used to spend the night. One day he came in the morning and he said, "Oh, there was a party in this village and they got drunk and they started fighting. Oh, it was so bad I had to run away." Okay? So we were sitting and all of a sudden we hear a shot. "Ah, you see," he says, "The police came and they probably fighting." A minute

later another shot. I have to tell you. Two nights before that we were sleeping. And you know, when you sleep in the forest, when a piece of wood is being cracked or when a bird is singing or anything. And one night Mother gets up in the middle of the night. "Somebody walked through here close by. I heard the way the wood was cracking." And the next morning she says, "I'm not staying in this place anymore. Let's go." And we moved out a little bit further down. So this day...one shot, two shots. All of a sudden we hear a machine gun. Uh, uh! Polish police, we know, doesn't have machine guns, so it must be Germans here. So we said, "Let's run from here." Mother said, "Let's run towards the shots." They said, "You crazy?" She said, "We go in that direction they going to chase us as far as they can because yesterday somebody was here and they know that we are in the area. We have to go towards them and pass them on the other wide. So we running and running and all of a sudden there is a little path. Okay? We walk into this path and all of a sudden we see a German standing with a machine gun. We lucky he didn't see us. So my mother says, "Wait. When he turns away we have to jump to the other said." And that's what we did. And we run and we run, I don't know...two, three miles without a stop. Finally we got into a place and we were sitting there all day long. At night we decided, okay, let's slowly move back and see what happened. We get close enough, two of the cousins said, "Okay. You wait here. We going to go."

NATHAN: You were with the cousins at the time.

MARK: Yeah. The two cousins. So they went. They came back and they said, "Forget it!" "What happened?" "Don't even look. It's a big pile of people laying there, and that's it." We went through and we saw what happened.

NATHAN: Just a minute. I've gotta turn over the cassette. (*HE stops the recorder and turns over the cassette.*) You okay? You wanna take a break?

MARK: I'm fine. Maybe you wanna stop for a while?

NATHAN: No, no. Okay. Let's go.

MARK: Okay. So it's Fall already. We had to look for some place to stay. So my mother says, "I know somebody in Brostek. Let me walk

over there and see." So she went there to one of the people who lived on the outskirts, and she came back and said they would take us for the winter. So we went to them and the cousins went some place else. And we were sitting there in the attic for a month or so and they came and they said, "It's dangerous to sit here. We live right to the main street. We have to look for a different place." Okay? They found, in another village, they found a house.

NATHAN: Where was this?

MARK: The name of the village? I don't remember. Nearby in the area of Jaworze. And we went there and the guy said, "Okay, I take you. But I have to protect myself. So what I'm going to do. I have pigs and I have a little..." Where the pigs stay.

NATHAN: A sty?

MARK: A sty. A pig sty. "I'm going to dig out a hole under the pig sty? Okay? and I'm going to put you there. The pigs going to be on top," he said. "And that's the way You have to sit in my place, 'cause I'm not going to keep you on the attic and I don't have a basement. If you want, I have to work and pull this thing out." Fine. A week later we come in there and sure enough he took the pigs out. He took the pieces of wood which were on top. Here's this little hole. This hole was big maybe... you could hardly just sit next to each other. You couldn't get up. The only thing you could do is maybe sit like this. (*HE crouches and hugs his knees.*) That's it. And we were sitting in this thing through the whole winter.

NATHAN: You must have gotten out once in a while.

MARK: Once in a while, on a Sunday. It was quiet.

NATHAN: What about eating? And the bathroom?

MARK: He used to bring us food. Between the pigs he moved this piece of wood. Okay? He brought us every day the same, which was borscht and potatoes. And then at night time...

NATHAN: What about going to the bathroom?

MARK: The bathroom once a day. This was if you needed to make...a stool. If you needed to...piss, you pissed in there. This was nothing. Pissing was nothing.

NATHAN: It must have stunk terribly.

MARK: It stunk! You stunk from the pigs already. I mean the pigs were shitting on you all the time. And that's the way we were sitting there. That was the only way to survive.

NATHAN: This was...how long?

MARK: This was... We got in there, I would say, like in November. And we were sitting there till...probably March, April. Then we had to get out from this place like Easter time, I remember.

NATHAN: Were you able to sleep at all?

MARK: You were in the dark all day and all night. You didn't know when is day and when is night. So you slept or you just sat and...I mean not sat. You were laying all the time. You couldn't do anything else. And there were many incidents going on.

NATHAN: Like?

MARK: Like once in the Spring. He says to us, "Okay. Sunday. it's quiet. Everybody's in church. Why don't you come out and get a little air?" So he took the pigs out and we were sitting and he said, "Okay. We go to church. You safe today." So we were sitting and then all of a sudden, like from nowhere, Germans came in.

MARK: Soldiers?

MARK: Soldiers. German soldiers. Mother looks and she sees the Germans. "Oh, my God! We be dead." So she says, "Let's go, let's go!" And she takes both of us by the hand and she runs out and she runs into the Germans.

NATHAN: She ran towards the Germans?

MARK: She ran towards the Germans. "What's going on? What are you sitting over there?" Of course, she speaks Polish to them. So one of them understood a little Polish. And my mother starts cursing out the man of the house. "I'm his sister-in-law. He brought me over here and take a look at my kids. He doesn't give us food. He's beating the kids. He's beating me. Take him! Kill him! Good that you came here." He said, "Why? What is it?" "Oh, he's such a bastard. He's doing this to us." And she's going on and on. The soldier takes out... You know they had these dry foods. He says, "Eat, eat. It's okay. It's okay. We talk to him. Don't worry about it. If you need food our army's stationed not too far away. You come over. We give you kids something to eat." She says, "Don't go, don't go. Don't leave us 'cause he's going to beat us up." "No, no, no." And they were happy to leave us and walk away. And that was one of the incidents. Once we were sitting and somebody came and took the chickens. I mean Pollacks were stealing chickens from the other one. And all the chickens start screaming and yelling. So the police were coming and he threw us out. We had, at night, to run into the woods in the snow and sit without anything till the whole thing calmed down. So after we left the pig sty was summertime. We went back to the woods. Okay? This was already forty three, forty four. And then we heard, and we kinda felt the war is getting closer to us. The front, the German-Russian front. We start hearing more and more like cannon fire. And on the outskirts we heard, you know, at night, when we met some of those people which we knew.

NATHAN: You mean Poles?

MARK: Poles. Yes, Poles. We heard that the German armies were getting closer. And we see sometimes the German army was getting into the forest. So it's no good to sit there. So, all of a sudden, we hear from the Polish people who live there, they said, "We have to run, too." 'Cause we could see, you know, that the shells were flying all over. "We have to move from here."

NATHAN: The Poles, too.

MARK: The Poles, too. Everybody. "Well," my mother says, "Everybody's running. We go, too. We make believe we from one of the villages. And we see where we can stay." So that's what we did. Mother and the two of us. And the cousins she says, "We have to separate."

NATHAN: You had joined up with the two cousins again.

MARK: We joined with the cousins. "We go our way. You go your way. Everybody's on his own. They separated, too, from each other. This was in the Fall of nineteen forty four. So we go. We walk with all those people. And we were walking, you know, barefooted, without anything and we just sat down in front of a house to rest. And the woman came out and she said, "Where are you coming from?" So my mothers says, "Oh, I'm coming from the other side of the river." "Oh, yes. A lot of people are escaping from there because of the front." "Where are you going?" So my mother says, "I don't know." So the woman says, "Listen, I have so many people already. Another three people. Why don't you be here with us?"

NATHAN: She assumed you were Polish.

MARK: She assumed that we were Polish. And, of course, we had to pretend like we were Christians. Sunday we went to church. In the morning at the table, before you eat, you say a little prayer. But somehow some of the people start questioning. "Are you from there? Where's your husband?" "Oh, my husband is running away." But at one point one of the women came to the woman of the house and she says, "You know, she must be Jewish."

NATHAN: Why did she think that?

MARK: I don't know. My mother was, you know, like dark hair. The features dark. A woman without a husband with two small kids. Anyway she said to the hostess, "You holding a Jew here." So the woman came to my mother and she says, "People say that you Jewish. Are you Jewish?" So my mother opened her mouth and she says, "How dare you accuse me of being Jewish? Who told you that I am Jewish?" So the woman says, "Oh, this woman." And that woman happened to be with dark features, too. So my mother says, "I'm sure she's Jewish. Take a look at her how she looks! Take a look at the dark features she has. How dare she say anything like that?" And then my mother took out this paper.

NATHAN: What paper was that?

MARK: Oh. Before we left Brostek, at the start of the war, Mother had this Polish friend and he gave her this paper with a Polish name. She's born in this town and so on. And Mother kept this paper with her all this time and she says, "Take a look who I am! How can you say such a thing?" "I'm sorry, I'm sorry. Don't get all excited. I'm just repeating what she said."

NATHAN: Hmm!

MARK: Another time, while were staying in this place that winter. They were constantly making homemade vodka. But the Polish guys were kinda afraid 'cause it was illegal. The Germans come once and almost caught them and they were afraid they would be shot. Now when you brew vodka the primitive way you used to take potatoes, you know, make them rotten for a while, and then boil them and it was coming out a tube. But while this was boiling you had to mix it constantly so it wouldn't burn. So they called me over and they said, "Listen, why don't you come do some work for us? You stay here. You be a good boy." They fooled me around, you know. "You mix this whole thing and when it's ready..."

NATHAN: These were the Poles?

MARK: Poles. Yes, Poles. So I was working one day, two days mixing the vodka. After we got, I don't know how many gallons, they said the job was finished. We came late at night so nobody would see to one of these Polish houses and they start to filter this. Okay? So after this was done they said, "Well, you did an excellent job. We have all this vodka here. Now you have to have a drink with us to celebrate."

NATHAN: You were...what? Six, seven years? Eight?

MARK: I was eight, nine years old. I didn't know the difference. So there were four guys sitting there. They took me and they put me in the middle of the room. Okay? And they pour a shot of vodka and this guy says "Nas drovya!" L'chaim! "Take the shot." So I take and I drink the shot. Whew! So he says to me, "Okay, now you have to drink back to me." I say, "Oh, okay." I drink to him. Next guy the same thing. I have two drinks with him. I have two drinks with the next guy. And while we're drinking it's late at night and my mother sees I'm not back home. She can't find me nowhere. Somehow she got to this house. She knocks

on the door, and while she's knocking they grab me and they threw me under the bed. And she walks in and she says, "Is my son here?" "No, no. He's not here. Nobody's here. G'bye." So she walks out. They pull me out from the bed, put me back in the middle and I was gone already. And they say to me, "Now you start singing. Sing some songs to us. You know any songs?" I say, "Sure I know songs." So I start singing. Meanwhile Mother was staying outside and looking. She hears somebody singing and she says, "Wait a minute. That's him!" Mother is looking through the window and what are they doing? Those son of a guns, they were pulling my pants down because they wanna see. They were suspecting that maybe we be Jewish. So they start pulling my pants down and my mother sees what they start doing and she jumps into the room and she starts screaming, "How could you take a little boy and make him drunk? Aren't you ashamed?" And she goes on and on and she grabs me and she spanks me and she says, "Get out of here. Go back to the house." And she says, "You going to see what I'm going to do to you. How can you do that?"

NATHAN: Hm.

MARK: One day, I don't know why, the Germans came and they took my mother away. They took her to Tarnow which was far away.

NATHAN: When was this?

MARK: That winter. This was January, February. This was close to the end of the war. We could see the Germans leaving everything and running away. And my mother was thinking, "Oh, my God! This is almost the end of the war and they taking me away." And I was on the outside somewhere and I was coming back and the woman of the house...she saw the Germans take my mother...she says to me, "Run away. Run!"

NATHAN: Where was your sister?

MARK: My sister was with my mother. My mother insisted to take her with her. So when the woman said to me to run away, I just run. It's winter time. Snow. Where should I go? So I just run behind the house and I jump into the snow and I was sitting there.

NATHAN: This was outside?

MARK: Outside in the pile of snow. I just covered myself and I was sitting there. It was nine, ten o'clock at night. Finally I fell asleep there. I was almost frozen. The next thing I remember I woke up inside the house and the woman was standing over me. "Are you all right? Are you all right?" I was shaking from this thing all day. "What happened? What happened? Where is my mom?" "Don't worry, don't worry. She be back, she be back." The next day Mom came back.

NATHAN: What happened?

MARK: What happened? This German was coming to the house to visit with the son of the woman because this son knew a little bit German. And this German soldier was kinda suspicious that my mother was Jewish. In Tarnow there was a Jewish woman who said something against the Germans, some kind of a curse. So they sent two soldiers and they took my mother to Tarnow and they brought her over to a hospital where there was this man. They told her, "You sit down and wait." So while she was sitting and waiting a Polish doctor came out and he says, "What are you doing here?" "I don't know. They brought me in here and I'm waiting to go in because this and this sent for me." So the doctor says, "Oh, my God, this guy is crazy. He's here in a psycho ward and I'm treating him. You get out from here and fast." So she says, "But how can I go?" He says, "Don't worry." And he gives her a piece of paper showing that she was here and everything's okay and the guy doesn't know what he's talking. And he says, "You run away from here because they going to kill you here." And that's how she got away from there.

NATHAN: This was towards the end of the war.

MARK: Towards the end of the war. The Germans were beginning to disappear and then like for two or three days was quiet. Nothing was happening. Then all of a sudden we see a little jeep coming in. We don't know who it is. We were scared to see anybody. And they were Russians. They asked for the Germans, "Is there anybody?" "No, no." And slowly the Russian army was passing by. And all of a sudden...liberated! End of the war! Well we figure now we free. We can do anything we want.

NATHAN: So what did you do?

MARK: First of all we decide, let's go back to our house. We came in there and we figure maybe some people will come back, too. We waiting, waiting. Nobody came back. So we were sitting there for a month or so.

MARK: And the guy was still there, your tenant?

MARK: The guy with the kids. The family was there. The front passed through so was some damage to the house a little bit. Fires and all those things.

NATHAN: And your father? What about him?

MARK: We heard stories. That time they took him and they put him in jail. Okay? And he was there a few days and one day the Polish commandant came in and he opened the jail and he said to my father, "Why don't you take a walk? Go outside."

NATHAN: Yeah?

MARK: "Take a walk." "Oh," my father said, "That's nice." He walked out, took a walk and came back. So then the commandant said to him, "I told you to take a walk. Why are you here? There's nothing more I can do for you. Why did you came back?" So supposedly my father said, "I know what you told me. But if I would run away the whole Jewish community would be killed, 'cause I'm the head of the community."

NATHAN: Yeah.

MARK: He said, "There are people living here. They have an excuse because I run away to do something to them. I cannot run away."

NATHAN: Because he's the head of the community.

MARK: "I'm the head of the community. I'm not going to do it."

NATHAN: Yeah.

MARK: So then, supposedly, they took him with everybody else in the trucks and they lined them up on the side of the road in front of this big ditch and they machine gunned them.

NATHAN: The Germans.

MARK: The Germans. They machine gunned them and then they covered them over in this ditch.

NATHAN: He was a hero.

MARK: Yeah.

NATHAN: You don't know where? You had no details?

MARK: No details. They just machine gunned them on the road and covered them over.

NATHAN: How did you find out about it?

MARK: Okay. This Polish friend told my mother that he was talking to another Pole, a friend of his, and he noticed the man's shoes and he recognized my father's shoes. This was a nice pair of shoes he remembered from my father, so he asked him, "Where did you get those shoes?" At first the man was embarrassed but then he told him that he was helping the Germans when they were killing the Jews. They had the Poles digging the ditches and afterwards they were covering them over. So when the Germans were killing the Jews they said to the Poles that they could take whatever possessions they wanted.

NATHAN: Was this after they were dead?

MARK: After, after. First the Jews were taking off all their clothes.

NATHAN: I see. So after the war you went home.

MARK: We went home. It was late Spring. There was no food. nothing. What to do now? Meanwhile we met a cousin who survived. I don't know if you remember Sabena Klotz. From Brazil.

NATHAN: Yes, my mother used to speak about her.

MARK: Well she survived. She survived as a Polish woman with Polish papers so she was better off than we were. She was moving around and everything and she was living in Tarnow. So we moved to Tarnow because it was a bigger city and more Jewish people from Russia, from the ghettos, from concentration camps. So it was already a Jewish community.

NATHAN: Did you have any money?

MARK: We didn't have any money. So what Mother did. We had a lot of property so she went and she sold a piece of the property.

NATHAN: Was she able to?

MARK: Yeah.

NATHAN: They hadn't given it to the Poles?

MARK: After the war everything went back to the original owners.

NATHAN: So all those relatives that you had in Brostek...Malke, Rivkah, Perchik...

MARK: Gone. And we felt that there was not much sympathy for the Jews, even after the war.

NATHAN: In Brostek?

MARK: In Brostek.

NATHAN: You felt you weren't welcome.

MARK: We felt we weren't welcome and we felt we'd be more comfortable in a bigger town. More Jews and even some police to protect us in case something should happen. So we moved to Tarnow and I started going to school. And my mother remarried.

NATHAN: Who was the man?

MARK: He lived, before the war, in a town not far from us. He survived in Russia and then he was with the Polish army and when he was discharged he came to live in Tarnow.

NATHAN: Had he had a family?

MARK: He had a wife and two children and they were killed during the war.

NATHAN: In a camp?

MARK: No. The same way as my father. They were machine gunned. What happened in his town was similar to what was happening in ours. He escaped from Poland while they were taking him on the trucks. He went to Russia and joined the Polish army. He was fighting, I know, in Leningrad. So we were there in Tarnow twelve years. From nineteen forty five. And then in nineteen fifty seven there were some changes and Jews were allowed to apply if they wanted to leave Poland and go to Israel.

NATHAN: Had you been thinking about that?

MARK: Oh, yeah. In nineteen forty seven, forty eight was the first time they allowed some people to get out from Poland and go to Israel. But we couldn't get out because they were making restrictions, you know. You go, you don't go.

NATHAN: But you applied?

MARK: We applied but that was the end of that. But now there were changes. It got a little more lenient and they said, "All Jews wanna go to Israel can go." So we applied and this was very fast. Like three, four months you got your papers.

NATHAN: Was this only to Israel?

MARK: Only to Israel. So we start rolling, seeing if we could get permission to leave 'cause you had to go through a screening. If you don't know anything which was secret and for the government and that you behaved, that you, you know, not against the regime or didn't do anything wrong, like you not a criminal. You went through this whole

thing and if they approved you got a stamp and you can go. So we were lucky. We were approved and we left. We went from Poland to Cologne in Germany. This was by train. And from there to Marseilles in France. And from there by boat...

NATHAN: How much...? I mean how much money were you allowed to take?

MARK: They did allow you to take your personal belongings.

NATHAN: Did they limit the amount of money you could take with you?

MARK: No. No money.

NATHAN: You couldn't take any money at all?

MARK: No money. Besides Polish money wasn't worth it a penny.

NATHAN: So how did you pay for the fares and everything?

MARK: Well, the minute you left Poland, automatically you became in the hands of the Jewish agency.

NATHAN: I see.

MARK: And they were waiting for you the minute you came to Cologne. And when you came to Marseilles you had already Israelis waiting for you, directing you.

NATHAN: How big was the group you left with?

MARK: Ten. Twenty. You mean, in general, how many people left? In general almost everybody left.

NATHAN: The whole Jewish community?

MARK: The whole Jewish community, with the exception, I think, about ten, fifteen people. Men, basically. Older men which didn't have nobody in the world. And they just said, "Forget it! We not going nowhere." Otherwise everybody left.

NATHAN: I see. Well, okay! (*HE stops the machine and takes out the cassette.*) Well, I've certainly got enough to think about. Oh, good Lord! Look at the time. I should be getting back.

MARK: That's okay. I drive you to the bus. They come almost every half hour. Maybe you'd like some lunch, maybe. Some coffee?

NATHAN: No, no, no. I'm fine. I'm curious. I don't mean to offend you, but we don't get together that often. And I was rather surprised at your dinner invitation.

MARK: Ah, I thought maybe...

NATHAN: Maybe what?

MARK: I thought maybe you could write maybe something about my experiences in Poland during the war.

NATHAN: I see.

MARK: I bring the car around. I meet you out front. You ready?

NATHAN: Yes. Yes, I'm ready.

(*MARK goes off.*)

NATHAN: Son of a gun!

(*NATHAN chuckles, looks about the room and goes off as the lights come down.*)

